



In 1881, the Sand Island Lighthouse was built to help guide ships to western Lake Superior ports. Some of these ships carried lumber, brownstone, and fish from the Apostle Islands to large cities on the lower lakes. The ships also carried passengers from around the globe to help settle the region. By 1918, Sand Island supported a population of more than 100 people. The majority of these were Norwegian immigrants who farmed and fished for a living. The stories of three long time Sand Island residents offer interesting glimpses of life on the Apostle Islands.

Emmanuel Luick

Emmanuel Luick was the Sand Island lighthouse keeper from 1892 to 1921. “Sand Island was just like home,” according to Luick. “There we felt free with the wind and the sun and plenty of open spaces.”

In 1896, Luick married 16 year old Ella Richardson (he was 29). Despite her youth, Ella inspired confidence in her abilities. She was frequently left in charge of the station for days at a time while her husband went to the mainland for supplies. The marriage did not last, however. On May 19, 1905, the keeper’s log indicated that, “Mrs. Ella Luick left for Bayfield on steamer Barker at 6 PM.” She never returned to the island.



Another disaster affected keeper Luick on September 2, 1905. “The storm that sunk the Sevona was one of the worst...She was an ore carrier on her way down the lake with a load of granular ore, and ran into the storm 20 miles below Outer Island. After battling the dense fog, wind and rain for

hours she was forced to turn back...they tried to make York Island and were grounded on the reef with seven lives lost.”

“In 1911, I married a girl from Iron River and took her to live at the lighthouse,” said Luick. “She was lonesome at times but when the children came she was kept busy enough.” He and his wife, Oramill, had four children, but only two survived infancy.

Mrs Luick remembered that, “My only neighbors were the wives of fishermen, but we stuck together. We organized a sewing circle...we met twice a month at each other’s houses, and got up nice little parties, besides...When you live for years with just a handful of neighbors, you remember them all your life...Some of the fishermen’s wives raised garden stuff, and a little fruit. We went three and a half miles for our milk, every other day.”

Emmanuel Luick was transferred to the Grand Marais, Minnesota light when Sand Island light was automated in 1921. He retired there in 1936.

Fred Hansen

Fred Hansen was a young boy when his parents emigrated from Norway to Sand Island in the 1890s. In 1913, at the age of 28, he began keeping a diary of his daily activities. His concise entries illustrate a way of life that changed little over a 25 year period.

- June 1913
- 2 Lifted. (Gill nets)

3 Lifted, through with plowing and seeding.

5 Lifted. Had birthday party in evening - everyone had a good time.

15 Got up at 3 - went over to Brownstone (Devils Island) and trolled; caught 9 fish. A fine day.

16 Lifted; the price raised to 7 cents (per pound).

17 Stormy. Built hog pen and planted rutabagas.
- July 1913
- 4 Went to Light on a picnic in morning. Dance in eve.
- December 1913
- 22 Mended nets. I and Herman Johnson went to Shaws in eve and played cards.


23 Hunted Christmas tree in AM. Swamped in PM. Hills spent evening here played whist.

25 Spent a very quiet Christmas at home.

26 I and Noring cut wood. At schoolhouse in evening-program.



Burt Hill



Burt Hill lived on Sand Island from 1910 to 1941. In 1896, he married Anna Mae Shaw, daughter of Sand Island’s first European settler. When Anna Mae’s father, Francis, retired from farming, the Hills left their home in Ashland to take over Mr. Shaw’s island farm.

“Early in 1911, I had made application for a Post Office to be established on the island which was granted and named Shaw, in honor of Mr. Francis W. Shaw,” recalled Hill. “ On June 20, 1911, I received my appointment as Postmaster and I opened an office. It was no trouble to get the mail carried during the summer months while the boats were running...But it was during the winter months that it was a hardship to get the mail in and out...We endured these hardships for five years, until May 15, 1916, when the Post Office was discontinued.”

“On June 15, 1918, all of the residents of the island gathered at the school house for the purpose of organizing a cooperative association and starting a store. The move was unanimously adopted and a store was opened up, July 19, 1918. It was given the name of the Sand Island Co-Operative Association. Fred Hansen was elected President...and I was its manager and Secretary, which office I held until the association closed up. My salary was a commission of 5 per cent of the sales and added up to between \$80 and \$100 a year.”

Burt and Anna Mae Hill maintained their island home until poor health forced them to move to the mainland in 1941. They were among the last full-time residents of the island. Today, several cabins on the island’s southeast corner are still privately occupied. The West Bay Club lodge, built as a clubhouse in 1912, also remains in private use. Please respect the privacy of these summer residents as you explore the island.

Hiking, Camping, and Boating

The Apostle Islands have a complex human history that is an integral part of the natural landscape. Sand Island is an outstanding place to view the return of wild nature to lands that have experienced many complex and changing human uses. Second growth forests, old farm clearings, foundations, and existing structures all tell stories about the people who used, and continue to use Sand Island. Today’s visitors experience these stories in several ways.

A two-mile trail connects the campground at East Bay with the Sand Island Lighthouse. A half mile north of East Bay the trail passes through an overgrown field (part of the Hansen farm). Justice Bay and a view of the Swallow Point sea caves are found at the trail’s midpoint. A mile and a half north of the campground, the trail passes through an area of virgin white pines. These 250 year old trees were protected within a lighthouse reservation. An overlook with a panoramic view of Lighthouse Bay is a quarter mile south of the lighthouse.

A second trail begins at the East Bay campground and leads west for one third of a mile to a farmsite once occupied by the Noring family. The site contains some historic farm equipment and

remnants of buildings. Beware of the old well located among the ruins.

Permits are required for all camping in the national lakeshore. A camping fee is charged. The campground near the dock at East Bay has a group campsite and two individual campsites. Another group campsite is located 200 yards south of the dock. A third individual campsite is located at the west end of the Lighthouse Bay beach. For detailed information, request the free “Camping” brochure.

A wooden dock is available for public use adjacent to the campground in East Bay. **Docks at the west side and southeastern tip of the island are for private use. Please avoid using these docks.** A rock shelf near the lighthouse is fitted with mooring cleats. Submerged rocks make extreme caution necessary when using this landing.

Boats often anchor at East Bay, Justice Bay, and Lighthouse Bay, depending on wind conditions. Visitors exploring the sea caves in sea kayaks or small boats should note weather conditions and use caution.

A Final Note

Insects and mud can lessen your pleasure in exploring Sand Island. Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, hiking or waterproof boots, and insect repellent may allow for a more enjoyable visit. Black bears occasionally inhabit the island. Campers must take precautions to store food properly and keep campsites clean. Pack out whatever you pack in.

Please help us preserve the island’s outstanding natural and historic resources while honoring the privacy of its remaining summer residents.

Sand Island

Key

- - - Trail
- ▲ Campsites
- ⛑ Group Campsite
- 🏠 Ranger Station

Island Dimensions

Length - 3 Miles
Width - 3 Miles
Shoreline - 11 Miles
Size - 2949 Acres

North

1.25" = 1 Mile

Lighthouse

Lighthouse Bay

Justice Bay

Swallow Point Sea Caves

Site 3

Sites 1&2

Site B

Noring Farm

Site A

Dock

East Bay

Private Cabin

West Bay

Private Cabins

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

